



Historic Courthouse

Action Plan to Enhance Services to Self-Represented Litigants



Larson Justice Center

**Riverside Superior Court
December 2002**



Southwest Justice Center

Riverside Superior Court Self-Represented Litigants Action Plan

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Introduction

In November 2001, the Superior Court of California, County of Riverside initiated an effort to identify ways in which the Court could improve services to self-represented litigants. Data gathered by the Court indicated that people were increasingly refraining from using attorneys when filing or defending cases, primarily because of economic factors.

The Court's Strategic Plan (see Appendix A for an abbreviated version of the Court's plan) states that the court is dedicated to improving service to the public by: 1) promoting better public access to the Court's services and proceedings and 2) increasing the public's understanding and familiarity with court processes, philosophies, and services. Consequently, a primary focus of the Court is improving its performance and implementing programs that further enable the court to provide equal, yet individualized justice for all. Thus, in light of the ever-growing self-represented litigant population, these values and objectives impelled the court to establish a task force to develop an action plan focusing on enhancing services to self-represented litigants.

This planning effort was partially funded by a grant awarded by the California Administrative Office of the Courts. The grant enabled the court to dedicate staff to assist with the preparation and coordination of meetings, data, and work products of Riverside County's Self-Represented Litigants Task Force. The court also sponsored the administration of a survey sent to all known county providers of legal and social services to self-represented litigants. The results of this survey further supported the court's belief that these service providers were also seeing and providing services to an increasingly larger percentage of individuals who were self-represented.

Task Force Membership and Acknowledgement

Riverside's Self-Represented Litigants Task Force, chaired by Judge Sharon J. Waters, was charged with:

- Identifying the extent of the need for more or different services for self-represented litigants;
- Assessing current services countywide;
- Recommending additional services where current gaps exist;
- Collaborating with the community in developing a plan to enhance current services and service delivery and ensure equal administration of justice; and
- Establishing performance measures for evaluating the effectiveness of the changes¹.

¹ This task was reassigned to the Self-Represented Litigants Oversight Committee, a committee that has been yet to be formed.

Its membership includes judges, private and public attorneys, county agency representatives, private non-profit organization representatives and members of the public. (See Appendix B for task force and subcommittee rosters)

Since Riverside County is so large geographically and because existing services are often regionalized, the task force determined that engaging in a “grass-roots” effort by establishing three regional subcommittees (Desert, Mid-County, and Western) would be the best way to address its charge. Thus, select task force members volunteered to chair the regional subcommittees and helped ensure a wide breadth of experience was represented on their respective subcommittees.

Each regional subcommittee reviewed an inventory of existing legal and social services in the county that was developed by staff in order to create a second inventory that contained their suggestions for enhancing existing or developing new programs (i.e., Inventory of Suggested Programs). The regional subcommittees met regularly to discuss their ideas, professional experience, and recommendations. All of these ideas were placed within the context of an action plan that was then reviewed by the countywide task force. This action plan, a true collaborative work product of three regional subcommittees and the task force, outlines proposals for establishing new programs and enhancing existing programs. The action plan focuses on steps the court and its collaborative partners (e.g., local bar associations, law librarians, community activists, etc.) will take in order to enhance services for self-represented litigants.

This action plan, and the extensive planning upon which it is based, is the result of the creativity, dedication, and energy contributed by members of the Riverside County Self-Represented Litigants Task Force and regional subcommittees. The court commends the task force and the regional subcommittee members for developing a prioritized, visionary, and achievable action plan, which stresses collaboration, resource sharing, increasing equal access to and the fair administration of justice.

City and Court Overview

Riverside County is the fourth largest county in the state, stretching nearly 200 miles across and covering more than 7,200 square miles. The county shares borders with Los Angeles, Imperial, Orange, San Diego, and San Bernardino Counties and extends from within 14 miles of the Pacific Ocean to the Colorado River.

Originally the County’s primary industry was agriculture, but commerce, construction, manufacturing, transportation, and tourism have become major businesses in the county, contributing significantly to the region’s rapid growth. Between 1980 and 1990, the population grew by over 75 percent, making Riverside the fastest-growing county in California. The growth continued but

slowed to 32 percent between 1990 and 2000. In 2001, the county had over 1.6 million residents.

Description of Need

The U.S. Census reports that in 2000:

Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14 percent of all residents, 23 percent of all children, and 28 percent of single parent (mother) families were below the poverty line. The percent of residents in poverty increased 62 percent between the 1990 and 2000 census (while population increased only 32 percent). 40 percent of households had incomes of less than \$35,000.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25 percent of residents over 25 years old do not have a high school diploma. Over 75 percent do not have a college degree.
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spanish was the predominant language of the 33 percent of residents who spoke a language other than English at home.

Court data indicates that:

Without attorney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40 percent of litigants in Probate Court and in general civil law actions are self-represented. 60 percent of litigants in unlawful detainer actions are self-represented. Nearly all family law cases have <u>at least</u> one litigant who appears without representation; and, a significant portion the family law cases in Riverside do not have any counsel-represented parties.
Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 60 percent of those seeking assistance in the court's Family Law Access Project² have an annual income of \$1,000 or less.
Interpreters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 92 percent of the Court's Interpreter Budget goes to provide services to monolingual Spanish-speaking litigants.

A sizeable percentage of Riverside residents are poor (14.2%) and over 48% of Riverside's population lacks the literacy skills usually attained by the eighth

² The Project is a collaborative effort between the Court and local, low-income legal service providers.

grade³. A substantial number of litigants are not represented by attorneys and, as a result, seek help from the court and other legal service providers to help them better represent themselves in their legal affairs, particularly in family court matters. (The number of self-represented litigants is also expected to increase as a greater number of the county's residents fall into poverty). The aforementioned statistics regarding the large percentage of non-English-speaking persons in Riverside County underscores the need to provide multilingual materials and services. Additionally, self-represented litigants are not only unable to afford full representation, but they are also unfamiliar with court processes, procedures, and legal requirements. Thus, without self-help services to guide self-represented litigants through the Court and legal processes, the potential for people not obtaining appropriate legal remedies and services increases exponentially. This data demonstrates the real and critical need to provide specialized services for self-represented litigants.

Thus, perceiving this growing need, the court spearheaded an effort to assess and enhance services to this population. The following action plan is the result of this effort, and it delineates the steps that the court and its partners will need to take to meet the needs of court users in order to improve access to justice for *all* residents in the county.

Self-Represented Litigant Action Plan

Program Areas: The program areas in which the Court will take action are:

- 1. MAKING INFORMATION EASILY ACCESSIBLE BY AND TO THE PUBLIC**
(Priority Number 1)
- 2. EXPANDING THE AVAILABILITY OF AFFORDABLE LEGAL SERVICES**
(Priority Number 3)
- 3. ESTABLISHING REGIONAL SELF-HELP CENTERS**
(Priority Number 2 – Tied with Program Area # 7)
- 4. COLLABORATING, EDUCATING, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH**
(Priority Number 6)
- 5. ENHANCING ACCESS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY**
(Priority Number 4)
- 6. IMPROVING TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING**
(Priority Number 5)
- 7. TRAINING COURT STAFF, JUDGES, AND COURT PARTNERS**
(Priority Number 2 – Tied with Program Area #3)

³ Adult literacy study conducted by Dr. Stephen Reder at Protland State University bases upon indicators from 1990 Census Data.

Program Partners: The court has identified numerous community partners that will assist with implementing the action plan as follows:

- Court leadership
- Court-Community Committee
- Court-Technology Committee
- Court leadership in nearby countywide court systems
- Local Legal Service Providers
- Interpreter Associations
- Senior Centers
- Shelters
- Riverside County Agencies
 - Public Defender
 - District Attorney's Office
 - Department of Public Social Services
 - Office on Aging
 - Department of Community Action
- Economic Development Agency
- Sheriff's Department
- Leadership and members of local bar associations
- Bench/Bar Committee
- Court Media Subcommittee (to be established)
- Local colleges
- Local media
- Judicial Council
- State Bar Board of Governors
- County libraries
- Law libraries
- Community organizations and agencies
- Family Law Facilitators

Program Plans: The specific tasks and related information for implementation of each program area are set forth below. Appropriate information will be inserted into blank spaces in plan when that task is a priority for implementation.

Program Area 1: <i>MAKING INFORMATION EASILY ACCESSIBLE BY & TO THE PUBLIC</i>

Description: Augmenting existing materials and programs, the Court will collaborate with partners to make available a resource guide to low-cost legal services, brochures on various court procedures and divisions, and workshops focused on procedures and forms. The Court will develop a distribution plan for publicizing resources, workshops, and information to gain public awareness, especially among self represented litigants. Additionally, the Court will create a public information booth at each court location. The Court will also establish an Oversight Committee to ensure that materials and programs share accurate and quality information in a consistent manner.

Program Plan:

MAKING INFORMATION EASILY ACCESSIBLE BY & TO THE PUBLIC			
Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
a. Establish Oversight Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Equipment • Funding • Facilities 	Court	2 months.
1. Decide the committee's charge, number of members, groups to be represented, and term of service.		Court in collaboration with local bar associations and legal service providers	
2. Select initial membership and appoint for a designated term.	Change existing task force in order to establish permanent oversight committee.	Court	
3. Appoint new members as necessary.		Court	

MAKING INFORMATION EASILY ACCESSIBLE BY & TO THE PUBLIC			
Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
b. Develop and make widely available information on the court, court procedures, and low-cost legal services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Funding 	Oversight Committee with the assistance of law librarians	1 year
1. Expand Countywide Inventory of Existing Resources by adding contact information and additional resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff coordinator • Procurement of Existing lists • Funding for production of lists 	Law library and staff coordinator reporting to Oversight Committee.	1 year
2. Identify and gather existing helpful material including procedural handouts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tel Law • Law Link • Staff • Funding 	Law library with court administrator.	3 months.
3. Identify and define missing information (case type, subject matter, and scope).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Funding • 	Oversight Committee	1 month
4. Prioritize and decide on standard format for new materials produced.		Oversight Committee	Initially 1 month, but task will be ongoing
5. Supplement basic material in “regular” language including form instruction, a general brochure, glossary of legal terms, and information on the roles of various “actors” in court and community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff. • Translator(s). • Funding for graphic design and production • AOC Resources 	Oversight Committee	12–18 months initially, but task will be ongoing.
6. Seek court user input on new materials to “test” effectiveness and usefulness of information presented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • Staff • Survey Instrument • UCR • IT 	Oversight Committee	6 months

MAKING INFORMATION EASILY ACCESSIBLE BY & TO THE PUBLIC			
Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
b. Information Availability (cont'd)			
7. Ensure full range of information is available to the public using various mediums (e.g., written, telephonically, graphically, posted on web sites).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • IT • Staff 	Court Executive office	1 year
8. Develop distribution plan to provide approved material to libraries, court locations, self-help centers, bar associations, and community service organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding (especially for postage) • IT • Staff 	Court Executive Officer	12–18 months
9. Confirm and update materials and information in resource guide biennially.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • Staff • IT 	Oversight Committee with subcommittee assistance	4-6 months
c. Develop professional quality Public Service Announcements to inform the public about local, low-cost services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant funding • Local Bar Associations • Staff • Interpreter(s) to translate materials into different languages • AOC Production Studio (CJER) Resources 	Oversight Committee to create Media Subcommittee. Subcommittee to collaborate with local bar associations, local media and colleges.	1 year

MAKING INFORMATION EASILY ACCESSIBLE BY & TO THE PUBLIC			
Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
d. Create information booths at each court location⁴.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multi-lingual staff or volunteers Space/facilities Funding Staff 	Court	18 months
1. Identify existing resources (e.g., maps, signs, most commonly use forms, etc.) and outstanding needs. Use materials developed as per item 1b – (see above)		Branch managers subcommittee of facilities managers group.	6–12 months
2. Improve signage at courts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Survey Court Users Funding 	Court - Branch managers subcommittee of facilities managers group.	6–12 months
3. Fill booth with information on the court, transportation and parking, and local low-cost resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding Staff 	Court & Local Bar Associations	Ongoing – weekly activity
e. Develop and conduct non-court-sponsored legal workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding Staff with legal qualifications (similar to those of a family law facilitator) 	Collaborative Bar Committee (to be established) & Legal Service Providers	1–2 years (roll out incrementally)
1. Advocate for the Creation of a Collaborative Bar Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judicial time for outreach 	Court/Judges	2-3 months
2. Identify subject areas on which need for education is greatest.			6 months
3. Identify existing effective workshops taught by attorneys and collaborate to maximize resources.			

MAKING INFORMATION EASILY ACCESSIBLE BY & TO THE PUBLIC			
Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
4. Determine audience(s) for various workshops and schedule to maximize attendance (i.e., scheduling on evenings and weekends).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Funding • Physical space/facilities 	Collaborative Bar Committee	
5. Identify staff coordinator.		Collaborative Bar Committee reporting to Oversight Committee	
6. Identify potential attendees by notifying people on "interest lists" gathered by libraries, bar associations, agencies, and organizations.			
7. Find workshop locations throughout the county.			
8. Resolve security issues, if any.			
9. Promote & Conduct workshops.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • IT • Development of scripts & videos • Staff • Interpreters 		
10. Explore broadcasting workshops (via teleconferencing) to other areas in the county.			
11. Create video library (digital) of workshops presented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • Equipment • Facilities/ Space to show videos • Staff. 		4 years

Program Area 2: <i>EXPANDING THE AVAILABILITY OF AFFORDABLE LEGAL SERVICES</i>

Description: The Court will collaborate with partners to encourage attorneys to take cases pro bono, advocate for the “unbundling” of legal services, and advocate against the unauthorized practice of law by paralegals in an effort to enable self-represented litigants to afford to hire an attorney and get accurate, appropriate, and affordable representation.

Program Plan:

<i>EXPANDING THE AVAILABILITY OF AFFORDABLE LEGAL SERVICES</i>

Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
a. Advocate for the “unbundling” of legal services	Staff resources will be necessary in order to develop a proposal for consideration by all partnering entities (e.g., bench, bar, etc.)	Local Bar Associations & State Bar	3–5 years
1. Identify current practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding State Bar Staff Coordinator for Local Bar Association 	Court and bar	
2. Seek bench decision re unbundling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Coordination AOC 	Court	
3. Seek local bar association(s)' decision(s) re unbundling.		Court, local bars, and Collaborative Bar Committee	
4. Organize a bench/bar meeting on unbundling.		Court and bar collaboration	
5. Draft letter to Judicial Council and State Bar regarding issues to resolve (e.g., rule and statutory changes)		Court and bar	

EXPANDING THE AVAILABILITY OF AFFORDABLE LEGAL SERVICES

Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
b. Expanding pro bono participation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • State Bar Assistance • Chief Justice & Judicial Council Assistance 	Bar Board with the assistance of court leaders	1 year
1. Create, publicize, and maintain pro bono lawyer referral list.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • Staff 	Developed and maintained by Riverside County Bar Association.)	
2. Identify and publicize attorneys with fees on a sliding scale.			
3. Create or identify system to match pro bono attorney with a case that needs legal assistance.			
4. Give priority on court calendars to cases with pro bono attorneys.			
5. Identify incentives for attorneys to work pro bono hours (e.g., MCLE credit, awards).			
6. Ask local bar associations to adopt the "State position" of performing 50 hours of pro bono work—to include work on committees—annually.			
7. Request that attorneys make donations that are the financial equivalent to 50 hours of professional services to organizations helping self-represented litigants if they are unable to provide those services personally.			

EXPANDING THE AVAILABILITY OF AFFORDABLE LEGAL SERVICES

Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
c. Publicize low-cost legal services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding Staff 	Bar and Legal Service Providers	1 year
1. Develop professional quality Public Service Announcements to inform the community that low cost legal services are available (e.g., FLAC, FLAP, 1058 Commissioners, attorneys with fees on a sliding scales).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant funding Staff resources IT infrastructure in order to place information on kiosks & court Internet Homepage 	Media Subcommittee, in collaboration with local media and colleges, reporting to Oversight Committee. Legal service providers should also engage in these activities on a more regular basis.	
2. Add cover page to packets of forms distributed by court (e.g., divorce) noting available low-cost legal assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for document production, translation, and copying Staff resources 		
3. Include notice of available low-cost legal assistance and court map with service of initial proceedings.			
d. Research ways to address the issue of service being provided by paralegals		Bar & DA's Office	Ongoing

Program Area 3: ESTABLISHING REGIONAL SELF-HELP CENTERS
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Description: The Court will lead the effort to establish locations throughout the county where self-represented litigants can go to find information about the court, court procedures, low-cost legal services, and agencies that can provide assistance. These centers will have the equipment to enable members of the public to access and print relevant documents via computer. The goal of creating these centers is to enable court users to access information at a time and location that is convenient for them to ultimately enable them to better represent themselves in their legal affairs.

Program Plan:

ESTABLISHING REGIONAL SELF-HELP CENTERS			
Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
a. Establish self-help centers to assist self-represented litigants in each of the three regions in the county.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • Staff • Facilities • Law Libraries and Librarians • IT 	Court leadership with strong participation from the bar and local law libraries.	1–3 years .
1. Jointly with the bar, apply for a community block grant to fund centers ⁵ .			
2. Identify materials and information to be provided. (See Program Area 1c above.)			
3. Find locations near courts, in bar association offices, libraries, city and county facilities, and other locations where the public frequents.			

Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
a. Establish self-help centers to assist self-represented litigants in each of the three regions in the county.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • Staff • Facilities • Law Libraries and Librarians • IT 	Court leadership with strong participation from the bar and local law libraries.	1–3 years .
1. Jointly with the bar, apply for a community block grant to fund centers ⁵ .			
2. Identify materials and information to be provided. (See Program Area 1c above.)			
3. Find locations near courts, in bar association offices, libraries, city and county facilities, and other locations where the public frequents.			

ESTABLISHING REGIONAL SELF-HELP CENTERS

Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
4. Resolve technology issues.			
5. Develop a plan to publicize regional centers.			
6. Develop lawyer referral service. (See Program Area 2b.)			
7. Identify staff for centers.			
8. Consider mobile unit.			5+ years

Program Area 4: COLLABORATING, EDUCATING, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Description: The Court, often via its Court-Community Committee, will seek opportunities to make presentations and obtain grant funding and additional staff to develop programs that educate members of the public on the breadth of available law-related resources in and for the community. Additionally, the Court will collaborate with other counties and agencies to maximize resources and ensure that information is accurately and consistently conveyed.

Program Plan:

COLLABORATING, EDUCATING, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
a. Identify existing outreach activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Legal Services Providers Law libraries Faith Community Financial Resources 	Court-Community Committee & Local Bar Associations	12 months
1. Develop a plan to publicize activities to public, bar, and organizations.		Bench/Bar Media Committee	6-12 months
2. Collaborate with local colleges to develop PSAs to publicize Court resources and activities.			12-18 months
b. Develop a speakers' bureau with experts available to make presentations to community leaders and organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Permanent funding for document production IT system for data collection and evaluation of program 	Court-Community Committee in collaboration with the Local Bar Associations	1 year.
1. Solicit quality presenters who are experts in a variety of subject matters to participate in program.			
2. Create list of topics and issues for which Court has speakers.			

COLLABORATING, EDUCATING, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
3. Draft talking points for presentation on Court activities.			
4. Prepare letter of Court expectations to be sent to new speakers.			
5. Develop a plan to publicize the program.			
6. Schedule engagements.			Ongoing
7. Confirm details with group and speaker.			
8. Contact local bar to inquire about scheduling a presentation by a judge on Court activities at a future bar meeting.			
9. Contact nearby law schools and community colleges regarding scheduling a presentation at the school.			
10. Forms should be distributed at the speaking engagement in order to minimize costs related to postage, etc.			
11. Conduct outreach to local attorneys to encourage their paralegals to participate in educational sessions offered by the local bar or Court.			

COLLABORATING, EDUCATING, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
c. Develop avenues for collaboration between the Court and law library to educate each other about roles, responsibilities, professional constraints, and information and resources that each possesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Funding Facilities 	Self-Represented Litigants Oversight Committee & Court Law Library Committee	6 months
1. Identify potential discussion topics.			
2. Identify discussion leaders with knowledge about particular issues.			
3. Schedule and organize ongoing meetings (perhaps quarterly).			
d. Inform jurors about low-cost legal services in the community (e.g., FLAC, family law facilitators) utilizing information prepared in Program Area 1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Funding 	Self-Represented Litigants Oversight Committee & Jury Committee	6 months
1. Identify issues on which jurors could benefit from education.			
2. Create corner or table for displaying written information on: existing resources, the court, and court procedures.			

COLLABORATING, EDUCATING, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
3. Identify existing educational videos to show to jurors while waiting to be called for a case.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video player and television at each court location hearing trials • Facilities/space • Funding 		
e. Expand existing efforts or establish a Court Resource Development Office to seek and manage grants and identify opportunities for partnering with the county, agencies, and organizations to enhance services to self-represented litigants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Funding • Court's Planning & Research Unit • AOC 	Court Executive Office	1-3 years once monies are identified
1. Collaborate with sister counties (e.g., San Bernardino) to maximize existing services and to develop additional services that are consistent between counties.		Community Committee	
f. Obtain additional staff and funding for Department of Community Action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Funding 	Court's ADR and Executive Committees with the County and Department of Community Action	4-5 years

COLLABORATING, EDUCATING, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
1. Collect and evaluate data on current and past workload, unfulfilled expectations, and missed opportunities.			
2. Seek support from appropriate leaders and organizations.			
3. Prepare proposal to include documentation of program and resource needs.			

Program Area 5: <i>ENHANCING ACCESS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY</i>

Description: The Court will expand the breadth of information provided on its well-used web site and computerized kiosks. Additionally, the Court should utilize new technologies to make Court services easier and more convenient (for example, e-filing of court documents and probation reports, and court hearings via videoconference).

Program Plan:

ENHANCING ACCESS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY
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Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
a. Expand charge of Court Technology Committee to include issues and goals related to self-represented litigants in its work. 1. Draft letter to current membership regarding new responsibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redirect existing staff resources 	Court in collaboration with the Self-Represented Litigants Oversight Committee	2 months
b. Place on existing EDA and ICLS' kiosks the information gathered and developed in Program Area 1—“Making Information Easily Accessible By and To the Public”. 1. Place links to Court's and other web sites. (Note: in order to do this, an effort that identifies quality web sites needs to occur).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Financial Resources Facility EDA 	Court Technology Committee in collaboration with the Self-Represented Litigants Oversight Committee	1 year and then ongoing

ENHANCING ACCESS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
c. Obtain “I CAN” kiosks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Resources Staff to facilitate the use of said kiosks IT hardware and software 	Self-Represented Litigants Oversight Committee & Court Technology Committee	3 years (depending on resources)
1. Outreach to local law libraries, , shelters, and legal service providers' offices in order to partner in procurement of and implementation of these programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for customizing existing modules Funding for hardware, software & system support 		1–3 years
2. Expand information on kiosks to include new modules on additional case types and forms.			
3. Maintain and update as necessary.			
d. Develop self-help web site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Resources Consultant assistance Staff AOC 	Self-Represented Litigants Oversight Committee & Court Technology Committee	18-24 months
1. Research utilizing and adapting web site models and information created by other courts.			
2. Explore making web site interactive and able to provide assistance during extended hours			
3. Develop the procedures and capacity to enable probation reports to be filed electronically.			3–5 years.
4. Develop the procedures & capacity to enable court users to complete & file documents electronically.			3–5 years.

ENHANCING ACCESS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
e. Assist self-represented litigants by holding court hearings and providing services via videoconference. 1. Identify cases and services for which video conferencing is particularly suited. 2. Create a list of videoconference sites throughout the county (and related information such as cost, hours of operation, and benefit). 3. Develop a plan to publicize to attorneys, agencies, and self-represented litigants. 4. Identify staff to operate, maintain and schedule use of equipment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities/space • IT hardware and software • Procedures/court rules • Staff • Legal Opinion from AOC • AOC 	Court Executive Office and Court Executive Committee	2-3 years.

Program Area 6: IMPROVING TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING

Description: The Court, in collaboration with County and City Transportation Departments, will work to ensure adequate bus transportation to the new courthouse and expand the maximum time and signage on parking meters to ensure that court users can get to the courthouse, find parking, understand the directions on meters, and attend to court business with ease. Additionally, the Court will coordinate court times and bus schedules and make information about transportation and parking easily accessible so that court users will have adequate options and information about getting to the courthouse. The Court will also work to promote adequate security and escort options for court users who are victims of domestic violence or utilize video conferencing capabilities to enhance access to those individuals who are victims of domestic violence.

Program Plan:

IMPROVING TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING

Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
a. Work with County to ensure bus transportation to new and all courthouses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Executive Office • Needs Study • Consultant Assistance 	Court Executive Office	Within 6 months and ongoing
1. Publicize new bus schedules.			
2. Explore collaboration with Dial-A-Ride.			
3. Make bus route and schedule information available in brochures and on the court's and other appropriate web sites.	(refer to Program 7 – Training Court Staff, Judges & Court Partners)		

IMPROVING TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING

Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
b. Contact City regarding expanding the maximum allowable times and translating signage on city meters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • City Liaisons • Financial Resources to conduct needs study • Develop survey instrument • Volunteers/UCR students to administer the instrument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Court Executive Office • Self-Represented Litigants Oversight Committee 	1 year
c. Increase signage regarding nearby available parking. 1. Post information about nearby parking options and rates on Court's and other appropriate web sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City & County Contacts • Financial Resources to conduct needs survey • Survey Instrument • Volunteers/UCR Students to administer the instrument • Interpreter to translate. 	Court Executive Office, Court Community Committee & Local Bar Associations	12-18 months
d. Contact Sheriff regarding providing security and escort services in DV cases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Procedures • Contact people for each court site 	Court & Sheriff's Department	12 months
e. Explore building parking structures⁶.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Resources • Needs assessment • Staff • AOC • Consultant 	Self-Represented Litigants Oversight Committee & Court Executive Office	3-6 years

⁶ This is not deemed an urgent priority at this time.

PROGRAM AREA 7: TRAINING COURT STAFF, JUDGES, AND COURT PARTNERS

Description: The Court will provide training for staff, judicial officers, potential court interpreters, librarians, attorneys, and volunteers in issues such as court procedures, issues related to self-represented litigants, community resources, cultural competency / sensitivity, and interpreter certification. Additionally, the Court will publicize existing training resources (e.g., CJER library) to enable court personnel and judicial officers to participate in training on particular subjects when convenient.

Program Plan:

TRAINING COURT STAFF, JUDGES, AND COURT PARTNERS

Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
a. Provide training for court staff, bench officers, private pro tems, law libraries, agencies (e.g., DPSS, law enforcement), and the bar.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AOC/CJER • AOC Self-help coordinator • Staff • Financial Resources 	Existing court training staff and Self-Represented Litigants Oversight Committee.	1–2 years
1. Identify training needs to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural competency and sensitivity • Legal reference vs. legal advice • Dealing with self-represented litigants in the courtroom, on the telephone and at the counter. • Available community resources (e.g., agencies, locations, interpreters, legal services) • Certification for interpreters (in collaboration with colleges) • Customer service • Volunteer training • “The other side of the Process” - Being a Court Client for a Day 			

TRAINING COURT STAFF, JUDGES, AND COURT PARTNERS

Task	Resources Required	Person/Org. Responsible	Timing
2. Identify presenters and trainers.			
3. Develop content of courses.			
4. Schedule sessions.			
5. Conduct courses.			
6. Evaluate training sessions.			
b. Publicize library of CJER training materials and other existing resources to judges and court staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • IT Resources • AOC 	Court & Training Staff	6 months
1. Research proprietary issues.			
2. Ask AOC to research existing resources and provide an inventory list			
c. Ask CJER to consider developing training tapes for distribution and use by courts statewide & place online for broader access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AOC/CJER • Staff time 	Court Executive Office & Court Community Committee	1-3 months

Existing Resources

During this time of severe resource constraints, the Court and its community partners will commit existing resources in the form of staff, equipment and other materials as available to begin implementation of this plan, where possible. However, additional resources identified below will be needed to support full and continuing implementation.

Additional Resources Needed

Although some of the action items delineated in the plan can be accomplished with existing resources, many will require additional staff, technology⁷, facilities, and state support (each action item in the plan notes additional resources required for that item, where known.) Other resource needs identified include funding for graphic design, printing, and distribution; translation services; video production equipment and expertise; city, county, university, and community contacts; and an AOC legal opinion. Additionally, the Court will seek to obtain grant funding and in-kind donations to implement the action plan.

Evaluation

The Court is dedicated to ensuring that the programs and services it provides are effective and accomplish their desired outcomes. After the activities are prioritized based on need, specific program concepts are developed, resources have been obtained, and program outputs have been identified, the Court and its collaborative partners will further refine each activity's goal and measures for success.

Performance measures could include:

- Percentage of self-represented litigants who know where to obtain assistance and court forms.
- Number of buses that stop at each courthouse.
- Number of locations in the county that distribute information on court processes and county resources for self-represented litigants.
- Number of judges and court personnel who receive training on cultural competency and sensitivity; dealing with self-represented litigants in the courtroom, on the telephone and at the counter; and available community resources (e.g., agencies, locations, interpreters, legal services).
- Existence and utilization of self-help web site (e.g., number of "hits" to web site).
- Number of hearings held by video conference.
- Development of long-term parking options near courthouses.
- Number of jurors aware of low-cost legal assistance resources in the county.

⁷ Hardware and software and system development.

- Presentations made to community organizations regarding action plan and enhanced services.
- Number of county residents using the services available at each regional self-help center/ Number of individuals served.
- Number of attorneys and law firms providing legal assistance pro bono.

The actual evaluation design and data elements will be need to be developed prior to project implementation.

State support

The Court developed a plan that will be implemented locally and is generally self-reliant. However, in order to ensure standardization, where appropriate, and effective and productive use of judicial resources statewide, the Court will need support from the Judicial Council on several key issues. The Court will look for leadership and guidance from the Judicial Council in determining protocols and best practices for unbundling legal services statewide. Additionally, the Court will request for continued advocacy for and the creation of incentives to encourage attorneys and law firms to increase pro bono assistance to self-represented litigants. Additionally, as stated in the “Resources Needed” section above, the Court will request assistance from various divisions in the AOC to develop or implement several of the action plan items (e.g., the Education Division for help with video production and the Legal Division for legal opinions). Finally, the Court will also seek funding from the Judicial Council, as necessary, to implement these (and other) creative and valuable programs that respond to Riverside County’s growing number of self-represented litigants.

Unique approaches

In developing its action plan, Riverside Superior Court surveyed existing services⁸ and resources and reviewed current and projected demographic and economic trends throughout the county. Additionally, it sought substantial input from agencies, organizations, and community leaders outside the court system. The plan emerged from local data and feedback and is unique to the circumstances and needs of Riverside County residents.

Additionally, unlike many counties, Riverside County spans over 7,200 square miles and is customarily separated into three distinct regions: Desert, Mid-County, and Western. This action plan represents the distinctive needs and combined effort of the three regions and reflects the court’s values to ensure that the administration of justice is: 1) individualized; 2) consistent; 3) fair; and 4) accessible to all court users.

⁸ See Appendix C.

Sustaining the Action Plan

The Court considers this Self-Represented Litigants Action Plan to be a dynamic, “living” document subject to the ongoing input of the community, collaborative partners, court, and state court system. Additionally, this plan will also be impacted by the experiences of other courts and the lessons learned from implementing and evaluating their action plan activities. Ultimately, the Plan will be amended as community needs and resources change.

The action plan was written using generic names of staff positions and agency personnel in order to accommodate leadership and staffing changes. Action items are also general with oversight responsibility given to different committees, agencies, and positions to provide allowance for refinement and clear delineation of subtasks over time as circumstances change.

The Court is fortunate to have the strong support of its bench, the local bar, the county, and community leadership. The breadth of the collaborative effort to enhance services for self-represented litigants will ultimately result in substantial encouragement, assistance, and advocacy for these and related efforts. Additionally, this support is critical to ensuring the continuity of existing and new programs.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

(Please see scanned document.)

APPENDIX B

RIVERSIDE COUNTY SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS TASK FORCE

- ◆ **Hon. Sharon Waters, Chair, Judge of Riverside Superior Court**
- ◆ Mr. José Octavio Guillén, Riverside Superior Court Executive Officer
- ◆ Hon. Robert G. Taylor, Judge of Riverside Superior Court
- ◆ Hon. James Warren, Judge of Riverside Superior Court
- ◆ Hon. Thomas Cahraman, Judge of Riverside Superior Court
- ◆ Ms. Inga McElyea, Mid-County Regional Court Administrator
- ◆ Mr. Dale Wells, Family Law Facilitator for Riverside Superior Court
- ◆ Mr. Albert Johnson, Small Claims Advisor
- ◆ Hon. Bob Buster, Member of Riverside County Board of Supervisors
- ◆ Hon. Roy Wilson, Member of Riverside County Board of Supervisors
- ◆ Ms. Gayle Webb, Riverside County Law Librarian
- ◆ Ms. Irene Morales, Inland Counties Legal Services Managing Attorney
- ◆ Ms. Aurelia Wick, Inland Counties Legal Services Supervising Attorney – Desert Region
- ◆ Mr. Ralph Hekman, Attorney at Law

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SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS DESERT REGION SUBCOMMITTEE

- **Hon. Robert G. Taylor, Co-Chair, Judge of the Riverside Superior Court**
- **Hon. Douglas Miller, Co-Chair, Judge of the Riverside Superior Court**
- Ms. Royann Nelson, Desert Region Court Administrator, Riverside Superior Court
- Ms. Jana Douglass, Desert Region Court Services Director, Riverside Superior Court
- Ms. Denne Howard, Attorney at Law, Mizell Senior Center
- Reverend Carl McPeters,
- Ms. Corky Larson, C.V.A.G.
- Ms. Pat Stewart, Riverside County Desert Law Librarian
- Ms. Aurelia Wick, Supervising Attorney, Inland Legal Services, Inc.
- Mr. Robert Hurley, Attorney at Law
- Mr. Dale Wells, Family Law Facilitator/Attorney at Law, Riverside Superior Court
- Ms. Maggie Martinez, Court Services Supervisor II, Riverside Superior Court
- Mr. Nick Rivera, Executive Director, CRCAC

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SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS MID-COUNTY REGION SUBCOMMITTEE

- **Hon. James Warren, Chair, Judge of the Riverside Superior Court**
- Hon. James Cox, Judge of the Riverside Superior Court
- Hon. Thomas H. Cahraman, Judge of the Riverside Superior Court
- Ms. Inga McElyea, Mid-County Regional Court Admin., Riverside Superior Court
- Ms. Diane Gray, Mid-County Court Services Director, Riverside Superior Court
- Mr. Robert Oblachinski, Attorney at Law
- Mr. Patrick Ramos, Principal Development Specialist, Riverside Economic Development Agency
- Mr. Albert Johnson, Riverside County Small Claims Advisor, Attorney at Law
- Ms. Margo Hamilton, Program Manager, CARE Program, Department of Public Social Services
- Ms. Ellen Phelps, Family Law Examiner, Riverside Superior Court
- Mr. John Labriola, Family Law Facilitator/Attorney at Law, Riverside Superior Court
- Ms. Danica Hanich, Hemet/San Jacinto Bar Association President, Attorney at Law
- Mr. Jude Powers, Attorney At Law
- Commissioner Barry Riemer, Riverside Superior Court
- Ms. Katherine “Kiki” Knight, Director, California Family Life Center
- Ms. Mary Jo Casino, Riverside County Office on Aging
- Ms. Joyce Fleming, Attorney at Law

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SRL Action Plan December 2002

SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANTS WESTERN REGION SUBCOMMITTEE

- **Hon. Ronald Taylor, Chair, Judge of the Riverside Superior Court**
- Hon. Helios “Joe” Hernandez, Judge of the Riverside Superior Court
- Ms. Lori Whaley, Western Region Court Administrator, Riverside Superior Court
- Mr. Richard Kennedy, President, Public Service Law Corporation/Attorney at Law
- Mr. Ralph K. Hekman, Attorney at Law
- Ms. Irene Morales, Directing Attorney, Inland Counties Legal Services, Inc.
- Mr. Daniel Hantman, Attorney at Law
- Ms. Gayle E. Webb, Riverside County Western Region Law Librarian
- Mr. Albert Johnson, Riverside County Small Claims Advisor/Attorney at Law
- Mr. Larry Maloney, Family Law Facilitator/Attorney at Law, Riverside Superior Court

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APPENDIX C

Service Provider Survey

Your organization is an important partner in providing justice services to the people of Riverside County. The purpose of this survey is to help the Superior Court identify the range of services that are both needed by and currently provided to self-represented litigants in Riverside County. Please provide the following information in detail, add pages as necessary to provide a complete response, and return the completed survey, using the enclosed self addressed envelope to Riverside County Courts, 4075 Main Street – Suite 310, Riverside, CA 92501 by October 15, 2001. Thank you for your participation in this survey and for the important assistance you provide self-represented litigants. The Court looks forward to working with your organization and others as it develops its Self-Represented Litigants Services Action Plan to find ways to enhance services to self-represented litigants in Riverside County. If you have any questions or comments regarding this survey, please contact Inga McElyea, Regional Court Administrator at (909) 940-6877.

1. ***Name:*** _____
 Address: _____

 Phone: _____
 Fax: _____
 Email: _____
 Contact Person: _____

2. ***Title and Description of Program/Services.*** Please state the title of each programs/service that you provide to self-represented litigants and describe the nature of the services provided, who provides this i.e.; attorney, paralegal, and the resources allocated to the program/services. Also, how the program/services is funded (optional). Please feel free to use the back of this form or provide any information that fully describes the program/services.

Title:

Description:

Provided by:

Number of Resources Allocated:

Budget (Optional):

3. **Clients Served.** Please identify the number of contacts/inquiries received and the actual number of clients served *per month* by the program area(s) you identified in Question 2, above. Also, please indicate the amount of time spent with each client.

Program	Number of Contacts/Inquiries	# of Clients Served	Time Per Client

4. **Population Served.** Please describe any restrictions that constrain the numbers or types of persons your program can assist, such as case type, financial guidelines, or other limitations.
5. **Services Requested.** Please identify the kinds of services requested by self-represented litigants that contact your organization (these may include types of services you do not provide).
6. **Change in Population(s) Served.** Please identify any general trends or changes (increases/decreases) your organization has seen in the types of people contacting you for assistance, in the types of services requested, or any other factors, and the time period within which you have noticed these changes.
7. **Language Needs.** Please identify whether you provide interpreter services for clients you assist, and, if so, the language(s) in which those services are provided

8. ***Referrals/Partners.*** To what other organizations do you refer self-represented litigants that your organization is unable to assist?
9. ***Unmet Needs.*** Please describe the nature of the any unmet needs that you see in working with self-represented litigants who contact your organization.
10. ***Other Comments.*** Please provide any other comments regarding self-represented litigants that you think are important for consideration in determining how to better meet the needs of self-represented litigants in Riverside County.